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ADULT LEARNING THROUGH INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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Abstract

Education is the only tool by which every corner of the country can be enlightened. This necessitates spreading adult education/learning awareness in the society to realize the concept of productive ageing, thereby having empowered citizens who can contribute for community well-being. For engaging people in learning process, teaching-learning approaches should be based on indigenous knowledge, by which their interest and curiosity can be aroused and sustained leading to balanced and sustainable development of the society. Through this study, an attempt has been made to identify opportunities for integrating relevant aspects of indigenous knowledge to adult teaching and learning.

Keywords: Indigenous Knowledge, Sustainable Development, Adult Learning, Innovative Approaches.

Introduction

Learning is a quite natural, continuous, purposive and universal phenomenon exhibited by all living beings, happens because of the aroused need or curiosity to adapt to or to adjust with the immediate environment thus, overcoming the barriers or obstacles met in routine life. Human being has intellect to modify the immediate environment to suit/fulfill his/her needs and demands. Garret writes, 'Learning is the activity by virtue of which we organize our responses with new habits', e.g., learning to ride a cycle by turning the pedal, balancing the handle etc in order to be reasonably safe with the vehicle (Kushreshtha,2011, p97).

Knowledge passed from generation to generation, unique to a culture or society, usually by word of mouth and cultural rituals, is Indigenous knowledge, which has been the basis for education, conservation, agriculture, health care, food preparation, and the wide range of other activities sustaining societies worldwide. Indigenous knowledge is also known as 'folk knowledge', 'local knowledge' and 'traditional wisdom'.

Indigenous people are well familiar with the valuable knowledge about ways of living sustainably. However, formal education systems disrupting and replacing the practical everyday life aspects of indigenous knowledge and ways of learning with abstract knowledge and academic ways of learning, resulting in the loss of indigenous knowledge. (www.unesco.org/education)

Benefit of indigenous knowledge is that numerous lessons can be learnt to live sustainably and their impact can be seen on human's social, political, economic, cultural life. Indigenous knowledge or traditional knowledge can be imparted practically through demonstrations and informal means- stories, ceremonies, dramas, songs, taboos, village meetings, etc. The view of knowledge is holistic and integrated with ecological validity and is stored in cultural practices. One can acquire long term wisdom as indigenous knowledge integrates critical thinking and cultural values in making right decisions and to have sustainable culture and ecology. Though require lengthy period of acquisition, but learning takes place through experience by role-modeling, ritual and story-telling and then testing it in practical life situations. (www.unesco.org/education)

Now-a-days, adult learning is being disrupted by the trends like microlearning, virtual conferences, flipped classroom, social learning, MOOC's, alternative credentialing, self-directed learning, self-publishing, etc. So, blended learning can result in better learning outcomes. Learning has shifted from lifelong learning to life-wide learning, reflecting to update, retool, rethink and relearn. Therefore, the rich cultural and traditional background of an adult can be used for giving lessons and guiding adults to have progress in terms of social, ecological, economic, political, cultural, spiritual and contributing for active citizenship. By describing the best practices and the implications, effort is taken to identify opportunities for integrating relevant aspects of indigenous knowledge to adult teaching and learning.

These traditional stories, songs, theatre etc. are considered innovative if we could present/relate the concerns and issues of the society through them and make people to reflect upon them.



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Reviews

Billet (2002) proposes bases for workplace pedagogy. Guidance by others, situations, and artifacts are central to learning through work because the knowledge to be learned is historically, culturally, and situationally constituted. Bye, Pushkar, and Conway (2007) in a study compared affective and motivational components of academic life for traditional and non-traditional university graduates. For all students, interest and age emerged as significant predictors of intrinsic motivation to learn, and both interest and intrinsic motivation significantly predicted positive affect. Cincinnato, Wever, Keer and Valcke (2016) addressed the issue of participation in adult education building on the cultural capital framework. The findings suggest that the cultural capital framework is not fully suited to explain participation in adult education. Although social background has an (indirect) influence on participation, its effect does not concur with theoretical predictions, that is, mediated by the readiness to learn. Guglielmino, Guglielmino, and Long (1987) concluded that outstanding performers in jobs requiring a very high level of creativity and problem-solving skills had significantly higher self-directed learning readiness scale scores than others and individuals who have completed higher levels of education tend to have higher self-directed learning readiness scale scores. Merriam and Kee (2014) argued that the promotion of lifelong learning among older adults can significantly contribute to community well-being. Their research suggests that the more active, healthier, and educated older adults are, the less drain they are on family and community resources and services. At the same time, active and healthy elders contribute to community wellbeing through their accumulated life experience, expertise, and service. Formal, non-formal, and informal learning activities of older adults promote an active and engaged lifestyle that help create and preserve community. Morrice (2013) suggested that models and theories based on transformative learning that ignore context provide only a partial and distorted picture of the learning and identity processes at work for this particular group of immigrants, which calls for an enlarged concept of learning and its potential outcomes. Salcedo (2010) investigate whether English native-speaker students learning a foreign language can benefit from integrating music into the curriculum. Results showed text recall was better in the song condition than text passage Music can empower students with a real-world communicative advantage. Schoepp (2001) Patterns that emerge for the literature include affective, cognitive and linguistic reasons- all intertwined and creates non-threatening classroom atmosphere.

Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in European context

European society is a knowledge society, need and demand-based society. By inculcating a learning culture within a society can help a nation progress overcoming economic and social crisis. Through adult learning, active citizenship can be developed, which will lead to productive aging and community well-being. With the development of basic and life skills like communication, numeracy, study, problem-solving, personal and social, and information technology skills, attitudes and values person can have sustainable and inclusive growth.

Well-developed learning provision should be made for seniors who are the repositories of enormous knowledge, experience and expertise, our social and cultural capital by promoting healthy and autonomous aging for the benefit of the society. (EU Council, 2011)

European countries have cultural, ethnic and language diversity. Like in every society, here also the cultural and traditional heritage is a means of socialization and contributes to most of the learning of an individual in his/her lifetime informally. Through traditional stories, songs, dramas, etc the conserved knowledge of a particular region or society is transmitted to the next generation in an effective and efficient manner.

Whittaker says, “Active learning” is defined as a pedagogical methodology characterized by student’s engagement in learning activities that requires them to take greater responsibility for the knowledge they gain. Our students will learn to think at higher levels and retain more knowledge. (Dale Whittaker, Vice Provost for undergraduates, Academic Affairs, Purdue University)

Few examples to illustrate innovative teaching-learning methods in Europe

(Vacarebu, 2011)

1. Biographic work: Associative picture cards (Austria)
By correlating the past, present and future a person makes effective adjustments and understand hidden issues and motives in life. The goal of biographical work is to find one’s own thread of life and to develop it in an active way.
2. Online café in language learning (Germany)
At any time and from anywhere, Blended Learning is an integrated combination of face-to-face instruction and technology-based E-learning is to allocate an increased amount of time to practice the language.
3. Community mapping (Italy)



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Community Mapping is a strategy that uses maps to gain understanding of a local situation and to facilitate discussion within a diverse group, and provide the basis to build a common understanding of the boundaries and characteristics of a community or neighbourhood, and of how all participants in the discussion fit into it.

4. Stepping in the picture (Latvia)

The use of a picture showing a real-life strategy is aimed at developing the participants' critical and creative thinking, decision making and problem-solving skills. It also develops the participants' social and civic competences, and as such has the potential of motivating them for further learning.

5. Reading with prediction (Lithuania)

Reading with Prediction is based on posing open questions to a group of readers who are reading the same text, stopping at specified points to discuss and reflect on the meanings of the text. The strategy is based on purposeful inquiry that helps to develop thoughtful, reflective readers.

6. Basic skills for group discussions (Romania)

People who hesitate to engage in a discussion may do so for a number of reasons; are effectively engaged in a discussion or debate, thereby increasing their chances of acquiring rewarding experiences connected to such participation and learning, which may in turn become motivators for their future engagement.

7. Film as a Tool of Motivation (Slovakia)

Film as a means of public pedagogy used, which mobilizes students to dialogue, for sustained participation in lifelong learning. The strategy is useful for developing communication skills (in the mother tongue and in foreign languages), critical thinking and the competence of learning to learn. Learners are engaged in deeper thinking, more lively discussions, and will gain highly pleasurable learning experiences that are a precondition for their voluntary search for new learning opportunities.

8. Active engagement in learning Occupational Safety and Health (OHS) (Spain)

Lack of motivation was observed in workers to participate in compulsory activities. This strategy motivates low-qualified workers to continue in further job-related training and enhance their engagement in learning.

We can deduce that in European context the adult learning approaches are group activity, collaborative learning, self-directed learning, learner centered, engages learner actively. Most important a friendly approach where the learner controls how, what, when and where he wants to learn.

Adult Education in India

Adult Education aims at extending educational options to those adults, who have lost the opportunity and have crossed the age of formal education, but now feel a need for learning of any type, including literacy, basic education, skill development (Vocational Education) and equivalency. A good education system for all citizens equips them to fight the social evils of poverty, unemployment, ignorance, ill-health, illiteracy, child abuse, molestation etc. in the society.

Basic literacy, civic literacy, functional literacy and developmental literacy, presently has changed to **critical literacy**, moving towards critical thinking empowering learner to ask questions, seek information, take decisions, have equal access to education, health, livelihood, and all public institutions, participate in shaping one's realities, create knowledge, participate in the work force with improved skills, exercise agency fearlessly and as a consequence, deepen democracy (National Curriculum Framework for Adult Education, 2011).

India has a multicultural and a pluralistic society with vast cultural diversity, ethnic diversity and language diversity. So are the various festivals and celebrations celebrated in different region are full of variants. Through the songs, stories, enacted dramas, the rich cultural heritage is transmitted from one generation to the next. The songs, stories, dramas are the storehouses of the lessons like discipline, hard work, honesty, courage, moral uprightness, one can learn to acquire basic and life skills to have a balanced and sustainable development. Most importantly, it engages people of all ages alike, creates and sustains their interest. This helps in bridging the generation gap, making adults realize their importance for community well-being.

Good Practices: India

Kala Jathas

Kala Jathas publicizes the string of government-sponsored welfare schemes introduced for various sections of society. The objective was to educate people about the government programmes launched to uplift the economically backward sections. In kala jathas, performances are given by local artists that included street dramas, singing and other cultural activities to create awareness about the benefits of programmes such as Anna Bhagya, Ksheera Bhagya, Manaswini, Vidhyasiri, Krishi Bhagya and other schemes. In addition, kala jathas make people aware of various issues and concerns of society. Like in Andhra Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh



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Pollution Control Board launched a campaign in which the troupe staged street plays at major junctions in the city to educate pilgrims on dos and don'ts to protect the water of Krishna River and its environs from pollution during Pushkaralu.

People's Science Movement

The people science movement aims at a critical understanding of science. It informs the common people on what science is being done, how and why, i.e., analysing policies, educating people and mobilizing public opinion on issues. By initiating programmes such as training teachers to use innovative teaching methods, training village women to use health information, training farmers to experiment and use science to improve the soil, etc., mobilising the poorest and putting into practice the promise of science-improving living conditions. The basic philosophy of the PSM is that Science and Technology (S&T) inputs are essential to achieve the goal of an equitable and sustainable society. (Shah, n.d.)

Bharath Gyan Vigyan Samithi (BGVS)

Bharath Gyan Vigyan Samithi (BGVS) is dedicated to promoting primary education, primary health care, women's empowerment, and rural development. It is a national organisation founded in 1990 under the National Literacy Mission Authority to support ongoing literacy campaigns. BGVS has attempted to bridge the three divides: Knowledge Divide, Economic Divide and Social Divide in the society through its programs. BGVS started with attempts to bridge the knowledge Divide but became increasingly involved in closing Economy Divide and Social Divide too.

Spreading scientific knowledge and scientific world vision amongst the people, working for literacy, continuing education, basic education, policy studies etc. are to close the Knowledge Divide. Efforts in watershed management, technology development, local area planning, formation of Self-Help Groups, development of micro enterprises etc. are efforts to close Economic Divide. Children's Science Festivals, Women Science (Samata) Festivals, Gyan Vigyan Vidyalaya (Wisdom Schools) Movement etc. all are efforts to bridge the Social Divide. BGVS is "an ongoing crusade of science and literacy for national integration and self-reliance".

Toy maker – Arvind Gupta

Toys for Science and Math Education We believe children learn by doing. He makes **toys** made from commonly used material and make science interesting and accessible to all. Though he prepares them for children, but his toys are equally good to simplify science and math's for adults also, motivating them to explore science in their routine activities.

Preraks

At the grassroot level, by Lok Shiksha Kendra, two Preraks may be engaged on payment of honorarium to discharge administrative and academic tasks. Preraks will also be assigned teaching responsibilities. Together with volunteer teachers they will constitute the resource group in a village. Since the Kendras will not have buildings of their own, Panchayats and concerned line departments may be obligated (Government of India). Prerak goes to the workplace of learner and teaches them at their convenience making use of their traditional knowledge.

Importance of folk elements (Madhya Pradesh)

Folk songs narrate stories of sacrifice, duty, love and chivalry using characteristic style of singing. The folklore of Dhola Maru, originally from Rajasthan, is popular in Malwa, Nimar and Bundelkhand region and people belonging to these regions sing about Dhola Maru's love, separation and reunion in their own distinct folk style.

There are songs that relate to festivities on Holi, Thakur, Isuri and Rai Phag. Dewari form of songs accompanied to the tunes of dholak, nagara and flute is sung on the occasion of festival of Diwali. Bumbulia songs are rendered on the festival occasions of Shrivaratri, Basant Panchmi and Makar Sankranti.

Folk theatre has been used extensively in India to propagate critical social, political and cultural issues in the form of theatrical messages to create awareness among the people. As an indigenous form it breaks all kinds of formal barriers of human communication and appeals directly to the people.

Maach is a traditional theatre form of Madhya Pradesh. The term Maach is used for the stage itself as also for the play. In this theatre form songs are given prominence in between the dialogues. The term for dialogue in this form is bol and rhyme in narration is termed vanag. The tunes of this theatre form are known as rangat. Folk tales also has an important role in knowledge transfer and personality development. It also has power to influence person's perception, attitude, behavior, and many other factors important to



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human's life as well as the society. Fairs and festivals are an opportunity for mutual exchange of experiences, expertise and the resources which helps in understanding the different cultures.

Conclusion

The purpose of adult learning is to equip him with basic and life skills. For adult learning, folk elements can be used in an effective and efficient manner to keep them updated with the changing world.

Adult learning methods should respect and incorporate the wisdom, knowledge and experience of community members. To facilitate adult learning, learner should participate and feel responsible for the planning and implementation of learning objectives, activities and assessment. The learning programs should be self-paced and time pressure should be minimized. Learning should make use of learning resources in a variety of sensory modes- visual stimuli, sight and hearing.

Finally, we can say that characteristics of adult learning are fulfilled by the folk elements assisting in overcoming the limitations of formal education. This creates a non-threatening learning environment, without a fear of committing mistakes. To have a balanced and sustainable development, teaching-learning methods should make use of folk elements. Folk elements are capable of satisfying adults of different learning styles.

All this discussion raises a question, whether the impact of folk elements of any culture on various domains of life i.e., social, economic, political, etc. changes from country to country.

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